

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, IT

SUBJECT: VIEWS OF CARDINAL OF MILAN ON JUNE 15 ITALIAN
ELECTIONS

LIMDIS

1. FOLLOWING IS MEMCON JUNE 27 WITH ARCHBISHOP GIOVANNI COLOMBO, CARDINAL OF MILAN AND CONSUL GENERAL.
2. CARDINAL COLOMBO IS A LIVELY, BLUNT CHURCHMAN WHO MAKES NO SECRET OF HIS STRONG OPPOSITION TO TOTALITARIANISM ON LEFT OR RIGHT. HE OPENED OUR DISCUSSION WITH A RITUAL DISCLAIMER OF BEING A PASTOR OF SOULS AND NOT A POLITICAL EXPERT.
3. THE JUNE 15 VOTE WAS A SHOCK AND SURPRISE TO ALL, HE SAID. THE GENERAL TENDENCY WAS EXPECTED BUT NOT THE LEAP FORWARD OF THE COMMUNISTS. AS A RESULT, ITALY WAS NOW FACED WITH A VERY SERIOUS SITUATION.
4. THE COMMUNIST GAIN WAS THE VOTER EFFORT TO PUNISH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS FOR ERRORS BOTH REAL AND IMAGINED. THE DC WAS BEING PUNISHED BECAUSE IT WAS CORRUPT, IT HAD FAILED TO PREVENT KIDNAPPINGS AND OTHER VIOLENT CRIME, IT WAS MORE INTERESTED IN PATRONAGE THAN IN SERVING THE PUBLIC.
5. THE PUBLIC, THE CARDINAL SAID, IS TIRED OF THE OLD FACES.

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LEADERS ARE CHANGED IN EVERY DEMOCRACY - ENGLAND, THE US,

FRANCE, GERMANY. NOT IN ITALY. THE MIDDLE CLASS IS LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS SHIFT TO THE COMMUNISTS. THESE ARE BOURGEOISE WHO ARE TIRED OF STRIKES, THREATS TO THEIR CHILDREN, TIRED OF BRIBERY AND THE BREAKDOWN OF GOVERNMENT. AND SINCE THE COMMUNISTS ARE POSING AS THE PARTY OF LAW AND ORDER, OF RESPONSIBILITY, GOOD GOVERNMENT AND HONESTY, MANY BOURGEOIS THINK IT IS SAFE TO RISK PUNISHING THE DC BY VOTING FOR THEM.

6. IN ALL OF THIS, THE TRAGEDY IS THE LACK OF AN ALTERNATIVE DEMOCRATIC PARTY. THE PSI SOCIALISTS ARE WEAK, DIVIDED AND HALF SOLD TO THE COMMUNISTS. THEY ARE VIOLENTLY ANTI-RELIGIOUS. THE MINOR DEMOCRATIC PARTIES ARE DIVIDED AND HELPLESS. IF ONLY THERE WERE A LAY DEMOCRATIC PARTY* HE WOULD BE HAPPIER IF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WOULD DROP THE "CHRISTIAN" AND BECOME A PLAIN DEMOCRATIC LAY PARTY WITH THE OTHERS.

7. WHAT CAN BE DONE? THE TIME IS SHORT, AT MOST TWO YEARS BEFORE NATIONAL ELECTIONS. IT MAY NOT BE ENOUGH. BUT THE EFFORT MUST BE MADE TO STOP THIS EROSION OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES AND THEN TO WIN BACK LOST SUPPORT.

8. FOR THE CARDINAL, THAT MEANT THE DC MUST PUT IN STRONG NEW LEADERSHIP RIGHT NOW. FANFANI, RUMOR, TAVIANI, AND OTHER TRADITIONAL FIGURES MUST GO. THEN, THERE MUST BE STRONG LEADERSHIP AND AN END TO THE FACTIONALISM IN THE PARTY WITH LESS ATTENTION TO CARVING UP THE PATRONAGE PIE AND MORE TO THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS. THE LEADERSHIP MUST BE FRANKLY ANTI-COMMUNIST. LETS NOT FOOL OURSELVES, THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN ITALY WILL DEVOUR SOCIALISTS AND CATHOLICS ALIKE WHEN IT CAN, HOWEVER SINCERE ITS PRESENT LEADERS MAY BE.

9. AS FOR THE CHURCH, IT PULLED OUT OF ITALIAN POLITICS TOO SOON. IT WAS AND IS RIGHT TO LEAVE POLITICS TO POLITICAL PARTIES. BUT THE CHURCH MUST LOOK OUT FOR THE FREEDOM OF MAN WHICH IS THE SINE QUA NON OF THE SURVIVAL OF HUMANITARIAN VALUES. IT MUST GIVE UNMISTAKEABLE MORAL GUIDANCE. TRUE, IT SAW THE THREAT BEFORE JUNE 15. BUT IT FAILED TO REALIZE HOW BAD THINGS WOULD GET. NOW HE THOUGHT THAT IT

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WAS AGREED IN THE CHURCH THAT IT WOULD HAVE TO GEAR UP FOR A SERIOUS FIGHT.

10. THE FORCES WISHING TO SAVE ITALIAN DEMOCRACY MIGHT FAIL. BUT HE, IN CLEAR CONSCIENCE, COULD NOT FAIL TO MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO SAVE IT. THAT EFFORT HAD TO COME FROM WITHIN ITALY ITSELF. ITALIAN DEMOCRATS COULD NOT EXPECT THE US TO SAVE THEM AGAIN. VIETNAM SHOWED THE LIMITS OF AMERICAN

POWER IN THE ABSENCE OF INTERNAL WILL.

11. HE HAD SPOKEN FRANKLY, HE SAID, NOT AS A POLITICAL EXPERT,
BUT AS A CITIZEN WHO CARED ABOUT THE SURVIVAL OF ITALIAN
DEMOCRACY. FINA

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